

BLUE & GRASS & BLADE.

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Editor

BORN TO HEAR

Sam Jones at High Bridge Camp Meeting.

I am just back from hearing Sam Jones at the High Bridge Camp Meeting.

Took my youngest boy; my wife won't go to them; she draws the line at camp meetings and circuses. She doesn't go much, but when she does she goes to Cincinnati, and takes in Lohengrin, with such folks as Patti and Albin and Nicolini in the cast. But there's nothing about it. I would not go to a one ring, two clown circus, nor to an ordinary Methodist camp meeting. I think they are demoralizing, and that Christian people ought not to patronize them; but a man or a woman who never saw Barnum, nor Jumbo, nor Sam Jones has not seen all of the world by a large majority.

I had heard that story that old Horace Greely got off about elders at camp meeting time, for at least five years before I ever caught on to it. One day it just happened to strike me, as I was walking along by myself, up by the custom house in Lexington, and I just thought in my soul it would kill me. I laughed for a week. It's too tough to put in a newspaper, but any newspaper man can tell you about it.

I am no prude nor Puritan, if I am a Quaker. I have no respect for any man who will tell me a story that is simply filthy. The dirtiest man in the world to me is a dirty story teller; but if just a little smut is necessary, like the shading in the back ground of a picture, to "point a moral or adorn a tale," I am not scandalized by it. I used to be in the preaching trade myself, and I know their ways. Whenever I hear one of these old sanctified Methodists, getting off that "Amen" gay they have among them, I always think about old Greely's story about camp meeting elders.

I suppose a thousand of these old time religious liars and hypocrites, who think the main part of religion is to believe those old Jew, Snake and Fish stories, have said to me that they did not object to my having my peculiar religious notions if I would only keep them to myself. That's exactly what I say about any religion. I don't mind how much of it a man has just so he keeps it to himself. But when you hear a man claim that he is "sanctified," and he gets to doing that "Amen" racket, and "Praise the Lord" business, if you have anything valuable about you you had better watch it. That fellow is fixing to steal something, or run off with some woman the first time he gets a chance.

The first three or four hundred times I read how Sam Jones had picked out one of these sanctified coons in his audience and called him a damned old beetle nose—a—f—, I enjoyed it very much; but after that it got to be somewhat monotonous.

I can't say exactly that I was so much impressed with the rhetorical flash of the expression, but I was powerfully impressed with the great amount of God's truth in it.

If a man, purely from an admiration of the heroic character of Jesus Christ, wants to imitate and emulate his life and character, and goes along through life honest and kind and doing any good that happens to come into his way, and is as jolly as long as he can be, and is sad when he is in trouble and can't help himself, and you never hear him say anything about religion any way, except when some body wants to talk to him about it, that man will do to the satisfaction of the sanctificationists that packs a bible around with him, and calls Sunday "Sabbath," and is always asking you if you can't drop in some night around at his prayer meeting it will pay you to watch that fellow.

He's got some notions on hand, and he's going to tell you the first time he gets a chance. Nearly all prayer meeting going and church going that is done these days, by men in town, is done for business advertisement. In the country they go to talk politics and gossip about farming. The women go to show their clothes, and the young people go to see each other. The sermon in at least nine cases out of ten, is a perfect bore to every body, and they all go home and lie about how they enjoyed it. But when you go to hear Sam Jones there is something just as really enjoyable, in it, as in going to a good circus.

I know that what I am now saying about Sam will sound strange to those who have read any of my many previous utterances about him.

I went to hear him this time, it being the second time, expecting to say, in my report of him, that I exceedingly doubted whether he was any good to the prohibition cause. Of course the Methodist part of his religion is poppy-cock to me, but I naturally felt prejudice in favor of his prohibition politics. I had actually chosen the first line of the article that I was going to write about him. I was going to write that Sam Jones, Sunday, hell, tariff and base ball were five American institutions that made me tired to read about; but I am going to take Sam off that list.

I have always thought it strange that I so radically disagreed with some men that I liked, when we came to talk about Sam Jones. I met, at the national prohibition convention at Cincinnati, Editor Aristede of the Nashville Issue. He is a nice man and a clear cut gentleman, a man after my own heart, and edits a prohibition paper that I wish I could make one like, as a general thing, but sometimes he fills his paper with the dirtiest rot about Sam Jones that I ever read, and yet,

strange to say, I read everything in it where I see Sam Jones' name. Bro. Aristede is a straight goods, orthodox Christian, of the Methodist stripe. I think, and it would seem natural that he should be stuck on Sam. But that's only because he's a good fellow. He is the United States of America. He is just as straight goods as a heathen as I am, and will miss a little beside when he hears some fool talking against woman suffrage. But he's dead gone on Sam Jones, and will talk your arm off about him any time you have two or three days to listen to him. Now how do you account for that kind of a mix-up? Let me give you a pointer. The Millennium is coming, and it will be here before you know it. In twenty-five years from now the people will no more listen to a man preach who does not vote for prohibition than they would listen to a horse thief preach. The Kentucky preacher to-day who votes for this drunken Democratic gang that has charge of the politics of this state is a case that you may hear of. There is no comparison. During the war, many a man who is now a good citizen stole a horse or several of them. When they had me in jail down at Paducah there was a great big honest hearted farmer that had a fist like a hog maul that used to come to see me two or three times a week. He was a Presbyterian, and the first time I ever saw, or heard of him, he and an Irish Catholic came to see me at the jail, and he quoted to me that I had said in the Blade that Catholicism was the worst religion that the devil had ever invented except Presbyterianism, and then he told me that he was a Presbyterian and that the other fellow was a Catholic. I told them yes I had said it, and I would say it again, and I was trying to bluff them. Things were looking awful equally for me down there, about that time, and I didn't know whether those two fellows were going to head a mob to hang me or not. I thought they might be Campbellites preachers or disciples, or both, and I know there was no telling what that combination would do, except something that was honest.

Well, when I said what I did they both pulled out their money and paid me for my paper for a year in advance. That Presbyterian was a Rebel soldier. He fought all the way through the war, and he and his gang kept it up for a month or two after Lee had surrendered at Appomattox, because he was away off somewhere and did not know that the war was over until two or three months after.

That Presbyterian had had about twenty-five first fights since the war, and he would have whipped Sweeney and Remington for me any day I encouraged him to do it. He liked me, so he said, for what I had done for the Rebel boys during the war, then he hated Sweeney on general principles, and then he hated me like any Presbyterian hates a Campbellite, and then he hated him because he is a Republican. As for Remington, the fact that he was one of the "four braves" that captured me at Springvale, has fixed his standing in the estimation of any truly brave man.

So that, in spite of that Presbyterian's religion, he is a man after my own heart.

But what I was going to say about that Presbyterian was that he talked about stealing a horse during the war, as if he did not think it was more harm than a Sunday school superintendent cashier would think it was to steal money out of a bank. I never exactly stole a horse myself, but when I was a college boy I have, pretty early in the night, borrowed some fellow's horse, saddle and bridle, and neglected to notify the owner that I had done so, and after I had ridden out in the mountains and the moonlight until about midnight, I have brought him back and put him in some other fellow's stable, for his owner might be around if I brought him back to where I got him; but I am not enough of a hypocrite to stand in a pulpit, holding the guise of respect to God for humanity, preach Christianity and then go and vote with either of those gangs, that representing Democracy and Republicanism, lately disgraced civilization at Minneapolis and Chicago, by crowding like beasts into every saloon and bawdy house in those two cities, and thus inviting the youth of the land to do the same.

I am going to talk to you straight. These things are disgraceful. You may pick out the best Republican and Democratic preachers in Kentucky who have intelligence and common sense enough to appreciate the crime against civilization that they are committing when they vote with that kind of cattle, and if heaven is to be peopled with that kind of cattle, you are straight.

Talk about religion and patriotism and Southern chivalry and Democracy, and talk about sending the gospel to the heathen, while Bourbon county will let a Republican Campbellite preacher, who has just expensively enough to appear in life wearing this same fool Methodist coat, preaching hell, and who has no more decency than to turn the bottoms of his shoes, propped on a chair, to your wife's face, as she sat in the court house watching my case, the very picture of grief and the object of the sympathy of every true man in the house—think of letting a man of his moral and intellectual cut come to the Blue Grass region of Kentucky, from the back woods of some Western state, and when enough of degree had befallen his family to bring a blush to the cheek of a government mule, such a fellow as that can go on with a lot of old rich whiskey liquors, and put not only me, the preacher of Barton W. Stone, with the blood of the Argyles in my veins, in jail in Paris, with the lowest of negro murderers and thieves, but also put in William Fielden who had been, for fifty-two years, an exemplary member of the Christian church, and for nothing on God's earth—the devil's which ever it belongs to—except that Bro. Ficklen and I were both prohibitionists, and we were opposing the collection of those Democratic whiskey smokers. As for me and my case, it's all right to let me go to the devil if I want to. I am a heretic and it's the business of the church to persecute men of my stripe. But if the blood of righteous Abel cried unto the Lord from the dust of Armenia, it seems to me that the tears of William Ficklen, that the deputy jailer

and I both saw in his eyes in the Paris jail, must appeal to the Christian church of the United States for redress against that fellow Sweeney who had him put there; and if that church does not investigate that case and repudiate that man Sweeney they are not the people I took them to be.

But I was going to tell you about that millennium business. The first thing you know you will wake up some of these mornings and the millennium will be here. There's going to be one great big church, and its going to be a combination of prohibition and the kind of religion I am preaching to you.

In that church, nobody will care about what anybody believes, the only test of membership will be what a body does. Sam Jones spoke of the Christian church as "Campbellites," but he said he liked them; he said the Methodist believed anything and everything you told him, because he was afraid the devil would get him if he did not believe. He said the Baptist believed in believing and in being baptized; but he said the Campbellites wanted you to believe and to be baptized, and then to do something where any priest had done. Sam's head was just as level as a squash, as he says. Theoretically the Campbellites are the nearest right of any of the orthodox religions, and the reason of it is that they have less orthodoxy in them than any of the churches. They are coming to the front fast on the prohibition line, and they will soon be hip and tuck between them and the Methodists with the odds in favor of tuck, in prohibition. They are to cowardly to stand up to the principles of their unwritten creed, on the Sunday question. All of them know that Sunday is not a part of Christianity; and they do lay too much stress on the baptism business.

All the good in their creed was put there by my grand father, who, at heart was just as much of a heretic as I am, and of precisely the same stripe.

He could not stand the racket against him, in his day, because he had nobody and nothing to back him. He said a half loaf was better than no bread; and like Solon said he made laws for Athens—not the best he could make, but the best they would stand—my grand father gave the people of his day the best religion he could give them, that they were capable of receiving and appropriating. All the trumpery in the Campbellite church was put there by Alexander Campbell, and is the drag of the old Scotch Presbyterianism that he made a fairly good, but somewhat unsuccessful effort to get rid of. The old Campbellites and I used to run together a good deal, and I should have tried to put something a little fresher in the way of theology into his head, but he was too old and too much set in his ways for one as young as I was to tackle. I am the only fellow I ever saw that made him laugh. I don't know whether he laughed with me, and I don't care, but he laughed all the same.

But I was telling you about the renaissance in religion. Things are going back to the old style in religion just like they have done in furniture and architecture.

The religion of Jesus Christ as he taught it, and as it was practiced down as far perhaps as to the conversion of Constantine was a grand thing, but this thing they call the church and Christianity now is not even a magnificent farce. The best church in Lexington is a fraud and a humbug, and the sooner it is closed out the better for humanity.

No preaching that a man does for pay is what it ought to be.

Jesus Christ never got a nickel for the sermon on the mount. At the same time that that Paris Christian church had Ficklen and me in jail because we were prohibitionists, it had its organs, a Dutch infidel probably, at a Keeley whiskey cure in Lexington, and two of the fellows running the Keeley cure are Lexington saloon keepers. And yet, if you just want to raise particular hell, and stir up a hornet's nest you go down to Paris and say that Christian church there is a "shebang" in "white" hell, instead of a magnificent farce. The best church in Lexington is a fraud and a humbug, and the sooner it is closed out the better for humanity.

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miracles; but I would just as soon believe in all the talking snakes and talking jackasses from Genesis to Revelation, as to believe the cock and bull stories that Flower offers, in the July "Arena" in support of hypnotism.

But the beauty of our religion is that any man can believe what he wants, just so he does right, and is tugging to do something to help humanity.

You recollect that Catholic priest, Mahoney, from Minnesota that gave a hundred dollars to the prohibition national executive committee at the Cincinnati convention. That's the only priest that I ever called "Father" or spoke of as "Father," except Father Mathew. I would just as soon call the devil Father, as the average beet-nosed priest with a bay-window on him that looks like he just swallowed a keg of beer and forgot to take the keg off of it. But I never, in all my life, met a man that my heart warmed up to more cordially than it did to Mahoney. The papers stated that when Father Mahoney opened the session of one day's convention with an extemporaneous prayer, he said the second instance on record in America where any priest had done it. We accidentally sat side by side at the table at the Palace hotel in Cincinnati, the first time we met, and he said to me that he had thoroughly made a martyr of himself in making that prayer. I had a seat near him, on the platform when he was praying, and I could tell that it was an entirely new business with him. The Catholics know that God hasn't done any talking to men since he wrote the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament, and superintended the translation of the Latin Vulgate, and they are not exactly certain about God's understanding English and Dutch or any of these modern languages, and the priests aint willing to fool with them when they have any praying to do. I should not be surprised if there was something in it. I was in France once. I had learned French according to the Allendort method. I don't believe that God would have understood what I meant if I had said my prayers in French. I know the French could not understand my French; but none of them had ever studied French; they had just sort of picked it up at home. I never was, in my life, so touched by a prayer as I was by Father Mahoney's English prayer, with just a little suspicion of Irish brogue to it. If there is anything that makes me tired it is to hear one of these dandy preachers get off a prayer so as to have the newspaper reporters say of it that it was one of the finest prayers ever delivered to an American audience.

Mahoney was too much of a scholar, and too good and honest a man, to make a fool of himself by saying anything that was silly, but he was evidently, as he said, martyring himself for conscience sake, and it more impressed me with the goodness of the man than any prayer I ever heard any man make.

When we met at the hotel dinner table and were talking about it, and I was expressing to him my appreciation of his prayer, he stopped suddenly and looked at me and said, "Are you the man they put in jail in Kentucky?" I said "yes." "Give me your hand" said he, and he shook it with a warmth and earnestness that made the tears seep up in the corner of my optic.

To see one of these Lexington Catholic sinners come into church and bow down to a plaster of Paris Saint Peter, with a couple of big smoke house Keys under one arm, and a ledger with his fish accounts, under the other, creates just about as much religion reverence in my mind as it does to see a lot of Chinaman stick little sticks in a flower pot of dirt, and worship them, like they do in their Jose houses. But between Father Mahoney and me there is four times as much religious sympathy as there is between any two preachers of different sects in Kentucky.

I reckon I have written more against Sam Jones than any other man in Kentucky. The time I heard him preach before, I thought he was the most unmitigated bore that I had ever heard. He made a slam at all infidels, said they were "all month" and that they reminded him of the pictures of the "hippopotamuses" on the circus bills. Barnum had been through the country, and had pictures of hippopotami pasted around every where, with mouths so big and so wide open that in the front view of them that was given you could not see much but the inside of the animal. For several years I could not see one of those pictures without thinking of Sam Jones who spoke his own language ungrammatically talking about such men as Alexander Von Humbolt, Galadino Bruno, Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin as being "all month."

But I must now say that the sermon or talk, or whatever it was, that Sam gave me yesterday, Saturday, July 30, at High Bridge Camp meeting was one of the most unique and original and truly witty things that I ever heard. It had some coarseness in it, and yet it seemed the necessary thing to impress upon the minds of his hearers the truly important things that he was saying. He made me feel ashamed of some of my imperfections and made me feel sympathetic with me in the treatment of a big distinguished Methodist preacher who spoke before Jones had put me to sleep. It perfectly unites a man to listen to the conventional platitudes of one of these elegant city preachers.

Sam Jones is not a consistent man; nor, for that matter, is any man. I called to see him at his cottage, before his sermon. He got out a stinking old pipe and lighted it, while I was his guest, and without even going through that empty form of asking me if it was disagreeable to me. If he should some day come to see me, and I should pull out an energetic and enterprising pole cat and begin to perfume the room with him, Bro. Jones would be offended. And yet, when it comes to perfume, as between a pole cat and a pipe, give me the pole cat all the time.

No moral responsibility attaches to the stink. He's built that way, from heredity, he's received perverted views as to what smells good and to what does not.

But a man who smokes a pipe in my presence, does not in my eyes offend my olfactory nerves, he offends my sense of right and decency and common sense, and makes me want to ease. I would forty times a day, rather ease a blue streak, forty times a day, than to smoke a pipe once a day. Let me tell you something straight, and without arguing the case. No man can be a full grown Christian who uses tobacco in any shape. Now

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for a long time. I would rather be such a man as George W. Rain. I think he is the greatest man in Kentucky, and he is now doing more to retrieve the character of Kentucky than any six men in it; but you some times have to use a jack plane before you can do anything with a finishing plane, and Sam Jones takes off the roughness and prepares the way for such men as George Rain.

There is never any heavenly music in a gloomy heart.